

# HEALING MEDICAL ARCHITECTURE

E. Tzouriadou-Teske<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Institute of Biomedical Engineering, Bogazici University, Istanbul, Turkey

This text is very different from the ones we expect to listen to in such a conference. In fact, this lecture deals with neither equipment nor procedures promoting the latest medical techniques in curing diseases. On the contrary it encourages us to look at the traditional, old-fashioned and well-known healing methods under a new light.

Western civilization has entirely forgotten the simple principle that as disease is psychosomatic, the same is true for healing. Society has deified Technology and Medical procedures to such a degree that all things in a hospital, including the patient, are there to serve these two gods. Patients aren't considered human beings, but just cases. Cases of disease to study and experiment with. The hospitals that accommodate services going along with this kind of mentality (that is, in case of need, the sacrificing of the comforts – or even the well-being – of the individual patient for the general idea of reducing morbidity or improving health conditions collectively in society) belong to the group of "Technology-centered" health facilities.

But lately another type of Medical Architecture has begun to appear. Mainly it started from the Scandinavian countries and it's spreading rapidly, especially in all developed countries being used to having only High-Tech. Medical facilities before. This new trend puts the individual patient as first priority in its list of interests, so this kind of health facility can be indentified as "Patient-Centered".

Thirty years ago I started my career in Hospital Architecture admiring and promoting Technology-Centered hospitals. I was visiting the most up-to-date facilities as a guest, not as a patient; and I was photographing and taking note of every detail. Then the time came that I visited one of them as a patient. During those long hours I was confined in bed with all of my human rights temporarily removed, simply because I had entered as a patient. I started to consider for whom a hospital is built; and came to an astonishing realization! High-tech hospitals are not built for patients; they are built for prestige. Usually they are the pride of the wealthy in society who can afford to build such miracles. They are glorious public buildings, just like the Town Hall, Opera House, Art Gallery, etc.

The only problem is that while the users of all other buildings are healthy people, the ones in hospitals are sick. I know what you are thinking now. You might wonder why I insist on considering the patients as the main users of hospitals when it is well known that in University hospitals personnel, students

and visitors always outnumber the patients. Though they represent the greater number doesn't make them main users, does it?

The lawful users of a hospital are, and always will be the patients. Patients are very humble people and all of this circulating flood of pride causes them confusion and even contributes to the deterioration instead of improvement of their condition.

Let's consider for a moment the Prime Minister of a country that has just completed the construction of a glamorous, high-tech, University hospital. He is, understandably, very proud of it. He takes his guests for a tour and shows them all the latest equipment, the endless spaces, the massive construction, the expensive abstract art pieces that decorate the main hall, or the atriums of the Example "A" hospital complex. But, if the same Minister becomes ill and needs to be transferred to this hospital as a patient, he will find the same things that he was so proud of before have become confusing and distressing. What changed? Only his attitude. He used to be a proud Prime Minister, but now he has become a humble patient. Although he is treated in the best room with all the needed respect, still he has lonely moments and still he is insecure and wonders if he will leave the facility on his feet or in a horizontal position. Pride and disease are opposites. They cannot coexist. When the latter comes through the door, the first goes out of the window. This is human nature.

It has been said that the disease of the mind is egoism, the disease of soul is passion and the disease of the body is pain or disability. In a healing process all three have to become better. God made things to work this way. If we violate His rules we will not get the anticipated results.

Do you remember the story of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11)? God's directions were explicit. He wanted people to be healthy, so he instructed them to scatter on the surface of the earth; each family to build their own individual, low-rise, home with lots of gardens and nature surrounding it and each person to work primarily out in nature to earn their living. That original plan never changed. This is still the essence of a healthy existence.

Humble people followed God's directions, but the proud ones thought that he He wanted to deprive them of their power, so they did exactly the opposite of what He told them. They gathered themselves in a big city, the biggest capital

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city of their time, started to build a skyscraper and made up their mind to live the civilized city life with all of its hectic characteristics. They didn't have the traffic and pollution problems we face today, but they certainly had crowded housing, unhygienic living conditions, oppressively hard work, slavery, and a shortage of education and recreation. All of these factors, at any given time, and in any society create disease. God saw the stubbornness of the people and stopped them in a rather unique way... due to which we still need translators today.

Then many centuries later, in another corner of the earth, in a country called Greece, it's people, the ones who developed the highest spirituality and culture of the ancient world, the founders of democracy, decided to build public buildings – among which are hospitals. They didn't choose to build high-rise buildings, although the technique was already known to them (pre-existence of Babylonian ziggurats, Egyptian pyramids, etc.). They had forgotten the existence of the One God and had replaced Him with their 12 gods, but they didn't forget His instructions about promoting health by utilizing low-rise buildings and open-air activities. According to Greek mythology Apollo, the god of sun and music was the physician of the 12 gods. His mythical son Asclepios was the father of medicine. The Greek hospitals of that time were named "Asclepeia" after his name. In Delphi (considered the navel of the earth in the ancient world) there was one of these "Asclepeia" by the oracle of Apollo which was considered his home (or rather his workplace, because to him home was supposedly on Mount Olympus). So, according to modern standards this Asclepeion had to be something like the University high-tech hospital of that time because it was located by the temple of the physician god. What kind of building do you think Greeks chose to build for their University hospital? Humble ground floor constructions made with local, simple, good quality materials and cheerful open plans, intermingled with the superb nature.

Ancient Greeks seemed to take into consideration and utilize the healing powers of three factors that modern western hospital planners tend to overlook. These are:

- 1) The power of prayer and contact with God which heals the spirit.
- 2) The power of human contact and care which heals mainly the soul.

The power of environment can tell truths that people try to hide and talk directly to the patient's soul, regardless of what other people say. It's not at all accidental that ancient Greeks appointed the god of sun and music to be the physician of the other gods. They wanted declare that sunlight, natural environment and good music and all kinds of arts have a healing power.

Fortunately people seem lately to rediscover the long-forgotten values of those 3 factors. After the coming of more and more information that the high-rise building is not

positive for the patients psychology; that the more advanced high-tech equipment does not have equally better healing results; that some modern abstract art, in hospitals, affect negatively patients, etc., hospital planners have decided to reconsider their values. Because they realized that these problems are going along with the specific Technological Era and didn't exist in older times, they paid attention to issues that were common knowledge during those times, while now are obsolete or have been replaced by modern technology.

Of course no one denies the value of High-Tech and wishes to go entirely back to the old techniques which might be more natural, but were also less efficient than the modern ones. The answer is that the good qualities of the two aspects have to blend in such a way that the valuable things are kept and the unnecessary are rejected. As a result of this school of thought, 2 different types of patient-centered hospitals have emerged:

- 1) High-tech hospitals which have all the modern equipment under a coverage where the primary concern is to provide a human environment to patients. And
- 2) "Wellness Clinics" which are hospitals based on a different philosophy altogether.

We are used to dealing with the pathogenic factors of failing health and the word "hospital" is connected with this ideology. It's time to go on and attack the problem at its root. If we consider the "salutogenic" factors of promoting health we can cure diseases more radically. The building in which such treatments are practiced cannot be identified as a hospital and in no way looks like a hospital. So a new term is invented which describes more accurately what is happening in it. This is the "wellness clinic". People are going there to prevent the failure of their health, or because they choose to be treated in more natural ways than the ones offered in a hospital.

A slide presentation of examples follows.

#### Bibliography

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